

NJ Wildlife Updates

For Licensing Agents and Fish & Wildlife Constituents

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February 2001

Director's Message



Greetings and best wishes for the Year 2001. This is a busy time of year for the Division as biologists compile data for the research and management projects conducted during the year and make plans for the upcoming field season. It is also a busy

time of year for the Fish and Game Council as its Game Committee reviews data and research results provided by the Division and considers proposals for changes to the upcoming year's game code. Please read the Council's Message in this issue to see how you can be part of this process.

Also, in this issue we are pleased to be able to tell you about some of the results of the license increase you supported. They include a winter trout-stocking program, two thousand more pheasants stocked on WMA's and a commitment to our website in an effort to improve our service and communication to the public.

Finally, I extend an invitation to join us at our Pequest Open House on March 31 and April 1. It is a great outing for the family and a good opportunity to talk to Division staff about our programs.

Bob McDowell, Director

Council's Message

The 11-member Fish and Game Council (Council) is responsible for adopting annual revisions to the Game Code (code) which describes procedures, dates, locations and harvest limits regarding the hunting, trapping and possession of game birds, game mammals and furbearers in the state. The Council is partially composed of elected representatives from the State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. As sportsmen and women, you can play a pivotal role in influencing changes to the Game Code by voicing your concerns and opinions to the Council during the months of January and February.

During this time, the Council's Game Committee made up of five council members is responsible for reviewing the existing code and identifying potential changes in the code for the upcoming year. Research results from Division of Fish and Wildlife biologists are provided to assist members in making determinations as to when and where in the state hunting and trapping shall occur, which species may be taken, and in what numbers. Input from the sporting public is taken into consideration by the Game Committee during this period and used in identifying potential changes to the existing code.

By early March, the committee is ready to present the proposals for code changes to the full Council. Once approved, proposed changes are made in the Code, which is then published in the New Jersey Register in May. There is a 30 day comment period that includes a public hearing which allows the Council to hear oral testimony on the changes to the Code. After appearing in the Register, enduring intense review at an annually scheduled public meeting and undergoing subsequent amendments if necessary, the Code is then ready for final adoption in June.

It is a time-honored, interactive process that relies on input from sportsmen and women like you to operate successfully. You can submit your input through your County Sportsmen Federation or by written correspondence to the Fish and Game Council, c/o Director's Office, Division of Fish and Wildlife, P.O. Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625-0400. Please choose to participate by writing down your thoughts and helping to shape the future of this year's Game Code.

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PEQUEST HATCHERY OPEN HOUSE

MARCH 31–APRIL 1

The Division of Fish and Wildlife will hold its Annual Open House at the Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center in Oxford, Warren County on Saturday and Sunday, March 31–April 1, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The hatchery is one of the country's most sophisticated fish-rearing facilities and annually produces more than 700,000 trout for stocking throughout the state's public waters.

"Open house at the Pequest hatchery is one of the Division's premier events, held just prior to the opening day of trout season," said Division Director Bob McDowell. "This is an event not only for trout anglers, but for everyone interested in the outdoors and New Jersey's wildlife. The Division of Fish and Wildlife invites the public to visit this fine facility and join us in a celebration of spring."

An exhibit of different types of fish sampling equipment, including state-of-the-art electro-fishing equipment and different types of nets will be offered again this year. Biologists from the Division's Lebanon Freshwater Fisheries Lab will answer questions and explain the techniques used to sample fish populations in streams and lakes. Visitors can also learn how to enhance fish habitat in a lake or stream. The Endangered and Nongame Species Program and Rockport Pheasant Farm will have exhibits, as will the State Park Service.

As in past years, there will be demonstrations, special displays and activities related to New Jersey's

fish and wildlife resources. For example, youngsters can learn about the Division's **HUNT SMART** education program and shoot a BB gun or bow under the supervision of a Hunter Education Instructor.

Wildlife artists Irene Bowers and Carol Decker will be on hand both days to display some of their work. In addition, Carol Decker will be available to sign copies of the book *New Jersey Wildlife Profiles*, which features her artwork of 52 wildlife species.

An outdoor "living history" encampment by the New Jersey Muzzle Loading Association will be ongoing both days, featuring the dress, shelters and artifacts of a bygone era. Trout Unlimited will have fly-tying demonstrations and provide an opportunity for the public to try their hand at casting various types of fishing rods. Other conservation groups will have displays in the Pequest auditorium. Visitors can feed the fish in the Fishing Education Pond, take a self-guided tour of the facility, hike the Natural Resource Interpretive Trail and take advantage of the picnic areas for lunch.

The Pequest hatchery is located on Rt. 46 nine miles west of Hackettstown in scenic Warren County. The facility can be the site of a family outing during the open house or anytime throughout the year. For more information about the open house or public and group programs call 908-637-4125 or visit the Division's website at www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Turkey Permit Application Period

Feb. 1-28

Applications available at Division offices and license agents.

Trout Stocking Public Meeting

Feb. 17, 10:00 a.m.

Pequest Trout Hatchery & Natural Resource Education Center

Turkey Hunting Seminar

March 21, 7:00 p.m.

Pequest Trout Hatchery & Natural Resource Education Center

Pequest Open House

March 31–April 1, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Pequest Trout Hatchery & Natural Resource Education Center

Spring Gobbler Season Dates

*Public Land Segment:

Hunting Period A: April 23-27

Hunting Period B: April 30-May 4

Hunting Period C: May 7-11

Hunting Period D: May 14-18 and 21-25

Hunting Period E: April 28; May 5, 12, & 19

*Private Land Segment:

Hunting Period J: April 23-28

Hunting Period K: April 30-May 5

Hunting Period L: May 7-12

Hunting Period M: May 14-19 and 21-25

*Refer to the *2001 Turkey Hunting Period Application and Season Information Supplement* for additional information.

HUNTERS CAN LOOK FORWARD TO ANOTHER OUTSTANDING GOBBLER SEASON

Permit Application Period

The *2001 Turkey Hunting Permit Application and Season Information Supplement* will be available at license agents and Division offices statewide in early February. As a result, the application period for filing 2001 turkey permit applications has been extended to February 28. All applications must be postmarked by February 28.

Hunters with a 2001 firearm or archery license may apply for up to two spring season turkey permits, as well as one fall season permit. The price per permit for adults is \$21; the cost per permit for youths under the age of 16 is \$12.

In the event permits are available after the mail-in lottery, they will be sold at selected Division offices throughout the state. Call the 24-hour computerized permit hotline at (609) 292-9192 in mid-April for more information regarding these sales.

2001 Outlook

Division of Fish and Wildlife reminds turkey hunters that the 2001 Spring Gobbler Season is scheduled to begin Monday, April 23 and will continue for five weeks. The outlook for the season is excellent with biologists estimating this year's wild turkey population between 23,000 and 24,000 birds.

2000 Reproduction

Wild turkey reproduction during 2000 was average due to the extremely wet weather, but since 1999 was an excellent hatching year, there should be numerous gobblers available. In fact, these juveniles should be even more "callable" than their mature and experienced counterparts.

2000 Harvest

An estimated 2,700 gobblers were harvested during the 2000 spring gobbler season and an estimated 200 birds (males and females) were harvested during the fall season.

Ongoing Research

A research project designed to provide information on wild turkey gobbler survival in the northwestern part of the state was initiated last winter and is still continuing. The purpose of the study is to determine through radio-tracking, factors that are

affecting the survival of gobblers in the study area.

The research is a cooperative effort between the Division, the New Jersey Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and East Stroudsburg University. The study is scheduled for at least one more year, though plans are being developed to extend the research for a total of four years.

Last winter, 51 gobblers were radio-tagged and tracked throughout the year. Though this is only the first year of the study, preliminary results indicate that predators are the major cause for mortality and that hunters contribute very little to wild turkey gobbler mortality. In fact, only three birds were lost to hunters. The Division plans to tag several more birds this winter to keep its sampling size consistent.

History

Spring gobbler hunting in New Jersey was initiated in 1981. The season was three weeks long with 900 permits available. Hunting was limited to portions of Sussex and Warren counties. In 1985, the season length was increased to five weeks. By the mid-1990s, through an ongoing intensive trap and transfer program, wild turkey populations were established in 20 New Jersey counties. In 1997, the entire state was opened to spring gobbler hunting. Since the beginning, record gobbler harvests have been taken in each season indicating continued growth in turkey numbers.



52,000 PHEASANTS & 11,000 QUAIL STOCKED ON STATE WMA's

The Division of Fish and Wildlife's 2000 Pheasant Stocking Program began November 11 and continued through December 30 with a total release of 52,000 birds on designated Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) throughout the State. The Division's Quail Stocking Program also began on November 11 and continued through December 30 with a total of 11,000 birds released on the Greenwood Forest and Peaslee WMAs.

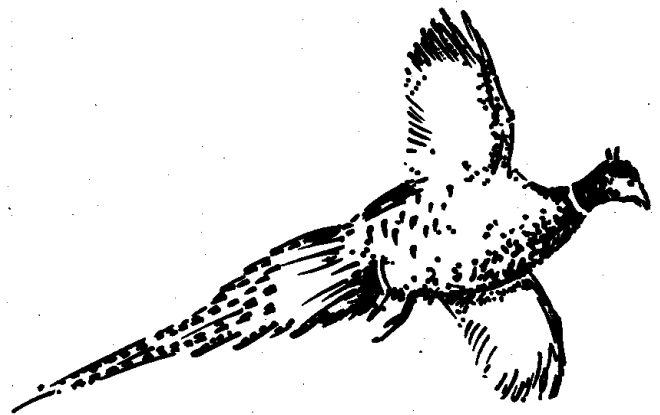
Originally a total of 50,000 pheasants were slated for stocking, but an additional 2,000 birds were added for release on designated WMA's throughout the state December 22, 27 and 29. The extra birds were the direct result of increased survival rates due to recently modernized facilities with improved pen construction, larger enclosures and an excellent growth of supplemental food crops such as sorghum and sunflowers which also helped to provide protection from the elements.

As a result of the additional pheasants, the existing stocking schedule was adjusted to distribute the birds evenly on 25 WMAs over the course of the three days which were the last three regularly scheduled stocking dates of the season. These dates were chosen to benefit the many hunters who enjoy taking their vacations just prior to the New Year. The birds were raised at the Division's Rockport Game Farm in Hackettstown, Warren County.

In December of 1999 the fee for a pheasant/quail stamp was increased from \$22 to \$40 with free stamps issued to qualified disabled veterans and all youths under the age of 16. Though the purchase of

pheasant/quail stamps decreased from 18,285 in 1998 to 15,405 in 1999, the decline can be positively translated into more birds for fewer hunters. Considering last year's price increase for a pheasant/quail stamp, the Division was pleased to be able to provide 2,000 additional birds to stamp buyers and will begin exploring the potential to provide even more pheasants in the next few years.

Pheasant and quail were stocked on the following WMAs: Flatbrook, Whittingham, Walpack, Black River, Berkshire Valley, Clinton, Pequest, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Colliers Mills, Howardsville, Fort Dix, Manahawkin, Stafford Forge, Medford, Assunpink, Manasquan, Glassboro, Dix, Mad Horse, Millville, Nantuxent, Port Republic, Tuckahoe, Winslow and Heislerville.



DIVISION'S WEBSITE A VALUABLE RESOURCE: www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw

As we move ahead in the 21st century we find the Internet becoming more and more a part of people's lives and the way we conduct business. The Division of Fish and Wildlife has been taking advantage of this relatively new means of communicating with the public by making information available to the public via its Website.

Visitors to the site can immediately find links to the latest news releases as well as the most recent research and management updates. Recent new features include a calendar of Division activities and the 2001 Freshwater Fishing issue of the Fish and Wildlife DIGEST. In fact, the DIGEST was available on-line before it was distributed in print form!

Besides information about hunting and fishing, many forms, such as license and permit

applications, are available in PDF format. And now, you can even purchase fishing licenses and trout stamps on-line and immediately obtain your license and trout stamp—right from your own printer! This feature will be of particular value to non-resident vacationers who no longer need to rely on the mail to have a license in hand before traveling to New Jersey.

The Division recognizes the great potential of the internet to improve its service and communication to the public and has a full time person dedicated to the website. Paul Tarlowe is the Division's web content master and plans to ensure the website is a resource the public can rely on to increase their enjoyment of our fish and wildlife resources.

DIVISION'S NEW WINTER TROUT STOCKING PROGRAM COMPLETED

This winter, the Division of Fish and Wildlife released more than 12,000 rainbow trout into selected lakes throughout the state as part of a brand new Winter Trout Stocking Program. The trout were raised at the Division's Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center in Warren County and will offer anglers increased fishing opportunities throughout the remainder of the winter and well into spring.

"These trout will provide anglers with a wealth of fishing opportunities this winter—especially those who enjoy ice fishing," said Division Director Bob McDowell. "In addition, the fish that aren't caught over the winter have an excellent chance of surviving to make the spring trout season that much more exciting."

A total of 24 lakes geographically distributed throughout the state were stocked with 12,940 rainbow trout averaging 10 inches in length. This stocking brings the total number of trout raised and stocked from the Pequest Hatchery to 745,000 for the year 2000. Targeted lakes ranged in size from five to 100 acres and had shoreline access and/or boat launching sites. Waters stocked were approved trout stocked lakes and excluded lakes that were stocked in the fall.

In North Jersey, 15 lakes were stocked from November 27 through December 1, 2000. In South Jersey, nine lakes were stocked from January 2-5, 2001. Interstate Highway 195 served as the dividing line between North and South Jersey lakes with the exception of Topenemus Lake, which was stocked along with South Jersey waters.

North Jersey Lakes Stocked

November 27–December 1, 2000

Bergen County	
Mill Pond	400 trout
Essex County	
Verona Park Pond	500
Hudson County	
Woodcliff Lake	510
Hunterdon County	
Amwell Lake	410
Middlesex County	
Hook's Creek Lake	520
Morris County	
Mt. Hope Pond	410
Speedwell Lake	520
Passaic County	
Barbours Pond	420
Shepherd Lake	1,000
Union County	
Lower Echo Lake	420
Warren County	
Furnace Lake	900
Sussex County	
Lake Aeroflex	1,000
Lake Ocquittunk	500
Little Swartswood	1,000
Silver Lake	600

South Jersey Lakes Stocked

January 2-5, 2001

Atlantic County	
Birch Grove Park Pond	460 trout
Burlington County	
Laurel Pond	250
Camden County	
Rowands Pond	250
Cumberland County	
Shaws Mill Pond	510
Gloucester County	
Mullica Hill Pond	410
Monmouth County	
Spring Lake	480
Topenemus Lake	470
Ocean County	
Lake Shenandoah	580
Salem County	
Riverview Beach Pond	420

DIVISION PRESENTS 2001 TROUT STOCKING PLAN

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife will present its recommended 2001 trout stocking plan to the Fish and Game Council at 10 a.m., Saturday, February 17, at the Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center in Warren County.

"I encourage freshwater anglers to attend and to review the proposed stocking plan. The opinions of New Jersey anglers are very important to the Division and Council in finalizing the plan," said Division Director Bob McDowell.

The plan calls for 575,000-600,000 trout to be released during the spring trout stocking season. According to Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries Chief Bob Soldwedel, the number of trout stocked in 2001 will be similar to past years and there will be a fall stocking.

A copy of the spring trout stocking list will be made available upon council approval and can be obtained by sending a self-addressed, stamped (for 34-cents), business-sized envelope to the: NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries, P.O. Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625-0400, Attn: Spring Trout Stocking List.

Please note that in the event of a snowstorm, the meeting will be held at 10 a.m. on February 24.

2001 MID-WINTER EAGLE SURVEY RESULTS

According to the Division of Fish and Wildlife, 144 bald eagles and three golden eagles were counted by more than 100 volunteers who participated in the annual statewide Mid-Winter Eagle Survey held January 13 & 14.

This year's tally is higher than last year's tally of 120 eagles and continues the rising trend in eagle numbers that began in the early 1980s. Wildlife biologists attribute the higher count to an early winter and frozen lakes and reservoirs in the north forcing eagles further south to more open waters.

The New Jersey survey is part of a nationwide effort to assess the number of eagles wintering in the lower 48 states. The survey takes place the same time each year and focuses on known eagle wintering areas throughout the Garden State.

AGENTS: ORDERING ADDITIONAL LICENSES

Additional licenses can be ordered by calling 1-800-252-0049 or 609-292-1438 Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. or you can write to: Division of Fish and Wildlife, PO Box 400, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0400. Please remember that the postal delivery service does not deliver on Saturdays and holidays and orders received after Thursday will not be delivered until the next week. Any phone orders received after 11:00 a.m. will not be processed until the following business day.